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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Family Care International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

In internationally agreed commitments, including the International Conference on Population and Development programme of action and the Millennium Development Goals, the global community has affirmed the interconnectedness of gender equality and women's health, particularly maternal and reproductive health. Poverty and gender inequalities pose significant barriers to maternal and reproductive health-care access and utilization. Protecting the human rights of women, including their reproductive rights, and ensuring women's sexual and reproductive health are central to empowering women.

Despite the availability of low-cost, high-impact interventions to address poor maternal health, health systems and current financial commitments for maternal and reproductive health are not sufficient to achieve Millennium Development Goal 5. Globally, at least 200 million women lack access to family planning and reproductive health care, and at least 60 million women give birth each year without a skilled attendant. As a result, some 350,000 women die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related causes each year. Virtually all of these maternal deaths are preventable, and it is time for the global community to fully commit to meeting the Goal 5 targets. No woman should die giving life.

This annual ministerial review comes at a critical time for mobilizing substantial increases in political and financial commitments to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to addressing the unacceptably high global rates of maternal, newborn and child mortality and morbidity. Family Care International welcomes the leadership of the Secretary-General in the development of a joint action plan for meeting Goals 4 and 5. The organization urges participants in the review to:

(a) Affirm the importance of implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments, including the International Conference on Population and Development programme of action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the Human Rights Council resolution on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights;

(b) Encourage the creation of development policies that affirm political commitments for maternal, newborn and child health, including reproductive health, and recognize the integral links between investment in maternal and reproductive health and global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve economic and social development;

(c) Develop criteria for development aid that ensure investment in long-term, evidence-based, high-quality interventions, delivered through effective health systems and with the full support and engagement of communities. These interventions should include comprehensive family planning; skilled care during and after pregnancy and childbirth; safe abortion services, when legal; immediate post-natal care for mother and newborn; and improved child nutrition. These efforts should take into account prevailing gender inequalities and discrimination, which prevent women and girls from accessing available health services;

(d) Support an increase in financial commitments for maternal, newborn and child health, as well as reproductive health. An additional $5 billion per year at the minimum is needed to accelerate progress on Goals 4 and 5;

(e) Develop an effective, gender-responsive accountability mechanism and agreed set of indicators to ensure development cooperation on and track progress towards achieving Goal 5.